

# Market and quality of medical services in Poland

( Rynek i jakość usług medycznych w Polsce )

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**Abstract** – Introduction. A value that ranks very high among the values valued by people is health. It is a value that enables plans, human aspirations and dreams to come true. It is assumed that health is a subjective condition assessed by the person concerned. According to the WHO, health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.

The aim of the study. The aim of the work was to present a brief outline of the contemporary medical services market in Poland and to draw attention to the quality of medical services.

Selection of material. The search was carried out in the Scopus database for the period 2007-2020 in the field of Polish bibliography, using the notions of *quality of health care*. From the literature found in the Google Scholar database, studies were selected which, in the opinion of the authors, would be most useful in preparing this study.

Conclusions. The quality of health care should be the subject of constant assessment, because it determines the quality of life of patients who undergo various medical procedures. A health service becomes a collection of various activities and actions and is assessed by the recipient as a whole. It is therefore the sum of partial qualities - medical, nursing, diagnostic and rehabilitation. The quality of medical services understood as a whole is therefore determined by individual employees of the health care system.

**Key words** – quality of healthcare.

**Streszczenie** – Wstęp. Wartością, która zajmuje bardzo wysokie miejsce wśród wartości cenionych przez ludzi jest zdrowie. Sanowi ono wartość pozwalającą na realizację planów, ludzkich aspiracji i marzeń. Zakłada się, że zdrowie to stan subiektywny oceniany przez osobę, której dotyczy kwestia zdrowia. Według WHO zdrowie jest jednym z podstawowych praw każdego człowieka.

Cel pracy. Celem pracy było przedstawienie krótkiego rysu współczesnego rynku usług medycznych w Polsce oraz zwrócenie uwagi na jakość usług medycznych.

Dobór materiału. Poszukiwania przeprowadzono w bazie Scopus za okres 2007-2020 w zakresie bibliografii polskiej, używając pojęć *jakość opieki zdrowotnej*. Ze znalezionej w bazie Google Scholar piśmiennictwa wyselekcjonowano opracowania, które zdaniem autorów byłyby najbardziej użyteczne w przygotowaniu niniejszego opracowania.

Wnioski. Jakość opieki zdrowotnej powinna być przedmiotem ciągłej oceny bowiem decyduje ona o jakości życia chorego poddającego się różnym procedurom medycznym. Usługa zdrowotna staje się zbiorem różnych czynności oraz działań i oceniana jest przez świadczeniobiorcę jako całość. Tak więc jest sumą jakości cząstkowych - lekarskich, pielęgniarskich, diagnostycznych i rehabilitacyjnych. O jakości usług medycznych rozumianych całościowo decydują więc poszczególni pracownicy systemu opieki zdrowotnej.

**Słowa kluczowe** – jakość opieki zdrowotnej.

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## Authors' contributions to the article:

- A. The idea and the planning of the study
- B. Gathering and listing data
- C. The data analysis and interpretation
- D. Writing the article
- E. Critical review of the article
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## I. INTRODUCTION

A value that ranks very high among the values valued by people is health. It is a value that allows plans, human aspirations and dreams to come true. The World Health Organisation defines health as the fullness of physical, social and mental well-being, and not just the absence of illness or disability. The notion of health and its protection is constantly changing, which is linked, above all, to social and civilisation progress. It is also assumed that health is a subjective condition assessed by the person concerned. According to the WHO, health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being [1-3].

## II. MARKET FOR MEDICAL SERVICES

However, health needs to be worked on and cared for, and certain habits need to be developed in order to strengthen and protect it. Everyone should take care of his or her own health, but for this to be possible, society must be given the right conditions for doing so. Article 68 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland passed on 2 April 1997 says that every person has the right to health protection [4]. It is therefore the duty of public authorities to ensure equal access to health care services financed from public funds for all citizens. An essential means of ensuring health and the most important form of health care is basic health care providing health services. Health service is, however, an activity serving the prevention, preservation, rescue, restoration and improvement of an individual's health, as well as an activity undertaken by persons exercising a medical profession.

According to the World Health Organisation, the top priority in health care is the quality of the services provided. It is the World Health Organisation that sets the goal that medical institutions strive to achieve in order to constantly increase the standard of their services [6].

The services that health care offers should be of high quality and meet the requirements of the environment and patients. It should be taken into account that nowadays there is strong competition on the health care market, high expectations of patients as regards quality and the way medical services are provided [7].

In connection with the increasing competition on the market in the provision of health services and the increase in patients' awareness and expectations regarding medical services, patient satisfaction surveys are carried out in in-

stitutions which hold quality certificates. According to A. Maciaga, the transformations in the society so far, e.g. increased expectations of patients, the possibility of choosing an institution, increased life expectancy, increased number of hospitals have caused changes in the sphere of effectiveness [8].

Quality is therefore a very important issue at the present time, and health care facilities must therefore strive for patient satisfaction and improve the quality of services provided. However, patient assessment of the quality of health services provides an opportunity to improve and improve services. The conclusions of the evaluation, in turn, serve to introduce improvements and quality improvement measures.

## III. QUALITY OF HEALTH SERVICES

Medical facilities are among the institutions for which ensuring adequate quality of service is a very important value. It is quality that determines the effectiveness of the therapeutic entity. It is the quality of services that determines the safety of patients, has an impact on their health and translates into confidence in the medical facility.

Adequate quality of medical services is also a very important issue in the management of healthcare facilities. At the turn of the last few years, there has been an increase in the awareness of patients, their families and their needs and expectations regarding health services. At the present time, many changes have taken place in this area, namely, an increase in expectations on the part of patients and the possibility for patients to choose a medical facility. The number of non-public hospitals has also increased and certification systems have been implemented. Competition in the market for the provision of health services has intensified, so the development and maintenance of a medical facility depends, to a large extent, on the quality of services provided by the medical entity. The quality of medical services, however, does not apply to the healthcare facility itself, its employees or the patient, but also to local government, the payer of medical services. [9,10]

In order to meet the expectations of modern society, which are related to medical care, it is necessary not only to introduce new medical procedures, but also to pay attention to the quality of these services [11]. The professional environment based on teamwork and mutual cooperation plays an important role in improving the quality of care and achieving job satisfaction, as well as improving the functioning of medical facilities.

In order to maintain a high level of service quality, teamwork is essential. The quality that the patient assesses also includes components that have nothing to do with the service itself, such as: the level of personal culture of the staff, reliability, reliability. These elements are most noticeable by the provider [7]. Patients consciously choose their medical facility. In this choice, they are guided primarily by the quality of services, their availability in a given institution. Patient satisfaction, however, depends on what the patient receives and what his or her expectations were [12].

#### IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTH SERVICES

The health care system is a structured, coherent set of factors and conditions designed to meet the health needs of society [13].

The current legal provisions defining medical services are [14]:

1. Act of 15 April 2011 on therapeutic activity (Journal of Laws of 2013, item 2017).
2. Act of 2 August 2014 on health care services financed from public funds (Journal of Laws of 2008 No. 164, item 1027 as amended).

The Act of 15 April 2011 on therapeutic activity defines a health service as "an action aimed at saving, restoring or improving health and other medical action resulting from the process of treatment or separate provisions regulating the rules of their implementation". [15]. Therefore, the provision is an action or set of actions that occur during personal contact between the patient and the service provider's representative, i.e. the doctor, the nurse. Medical services include [15]:

- diagnostic test,
- medical advice,
- pharmacological and psychological therapy,
- rehabilitation, - nursing care,
- adjudication and opinion on health,
- preventive measures, - preventive vaccination and palliative care.

The provision of the above mentioned services is accompanied by the involvement of various other factual factors such as: medical apparatus, orthopaedic equipment or pharmaceuticals [16].

The literature also refers to the concept of medical services as treatment-oriented activities that aim to meet the needs arising from illness. High quality health services are

those that meet specific criteria and current state of medical knowledge within their resources and provide the patient with maximum health gain and minimum risk [11].

The quality of health service is also dependent on the patient's initial condition. Medical services vary from simple medical advice to specialist services provided by the hospital. A medical service is not only the treatment of the patient but also the benefits perceived by the patient. An important feature of a health service is the relationship that arises during provision, which affects patient satisfaction. [17]

Medical services are professional services characterised by [17,18]:

- expertise,
- high qualifications of the staff and continuous improvement,
- the specific nature of the staff's personality,
- acting in accordance with the ethics of altruism,
- the impact on other people's lives.

In order for a medical service to be created, it is necessary for there to be an entity that will provide this service.

The providers are [18]:

1. Healthcare facilities.
2. Medical practitioners.
3. Persons entitled to provide benefits as part of their business activity.

The patient, as a purchaser of the service, assesses the overall care on the basis of all the impressions he or she receives each time he or she comes into contact with a nurse or medical staff. This assessment shall be related to satisfaction or lack of satisfaction in direct contact with the provider. However, as a purchaser of the service, the patient does not always perceive the service objectively, because everything he sees and remembers is emotional and subjective. The quality of nursing care is also a component of the overall quality of care provided in a healthcare facility. [11]

The criteria according to which the patient most often evaluates the satisfaction with the obtained services are [11,13,14]:

- Punctuality - the patient has a negative opinion of the lack of punctuality, mainly concerning waiting for the performance of treatment or diagnostic procedures. Lack of information about the reasons for being punctual is the reason why patients have the impression that they are being ignored;
- communication with a nurse, because some patients claim that nurses spend too little time talking to them;

- patients' lack of autonomy and privacy.

In the assessment of nursing care, patients take into account [13,14]:

- The effectiveness of its activities,
- Carrying out medical orders, - participation in diagnostic tests,
- Providing support for family and patient,
- The way information is provided,
- The empathy shown to the patient and the organisation of patient care.

The presented elements influence the quality of care received by the patient and, at the same time, influence the assessment of the quality of life [19]. Therefore, a health service is a set of various activities and actions and is assessed by the recipient, i.e. the patient as a whole. Thus, it is a sum of partial qualities - medical, nursing, diagnostic and rehabilitation [20].

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